



Success Stories



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Wisconsin Forest Provides State Capitol Tree

A quest for the perfect 2003 Christmas tree for the Wisconsin State Capitol came to a successful end on the Chequamegon–Nicolet National Forest, Park Falls/Medford Ranger District.

On November 19, Bill Beckman, Maintenance Supervisor for the State Department of Administration in Madison, made his final decision. Beckman selected a balsam fir tree for the 2003 State Christmas tree.

As a state employee for 25 years, Beckman has selected a tree each year in much the same way as did his predecessors. It's believed the tradition has been carried out since construction of the Wisconsin capitol was completed in 1917.

Forest Service Forestry Technician Jim Thompson is the sale harvest inspector on active timber sale contracts on the Medford Ranger District and has kept a lookout for the symmetrical balsam fir (*Abies balsamea*) all year while out in the field.

The balsam fir survives in cool, moist, or shaded places. This particular

tree was found in the Jump River

Township of Taylor County on national forestland. The proud tree stands in an area that had been cleared and saved for nesting birds.

The 30-plus year-old tree is about 40 feet tall and its estimated weight is between 600 and 800 pounds. The overall spread of the tree base is 15 feet.

Jim Leinfelder, an operator for Greg and Tim DeBoth of Prentice, harvested the handsome tree using a whole-tree harvest processor on November 25.

Preparations have included determining which sides the tree were cut and laid during transporting. Upon arrival, the tree was wrapped with plastic to enfold the tied branches.

Decorating began the week after Thanksgiving. Decorations vary from year to year. Many different organizations have volunteered through the years to donate decorations. The ornaments can be seasonal or thematic.

Eighteen hundred to two thousand lights are nestled amongst the branches. A snowflake is used for the treetop if there is no group to donate. The tree topper floats by fish line four feet above the tree for a stunning visual effect.

"The employees of the Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest are excited and proud to contribute the Capitol Christmas tree this year," said Forest Supervisor Anne Archie. "This is a good example of how federal and state forestry management contributes to the social and ecological health of the State."

The tree lighting ceremony took place December 5 at 12:00 p.m. The Chequamegon–Nicolet National Forest was represented by Jim Thompson and Public Affairs Assistant Jeryl Perenich from Rhinelander, who presented the tree to the people of the State represented by Governor James Doyle. The governor gave a short speech and then instructed a special child to pull the switch and turn on the lights.

Next year, the Department of Natural Resources celebrates "2004 – The Year of Forestry" and will provide the tree and ornaments. Meanwhile, keep your eyes peeled for the perfect balsam fir that could become a future State Capitol Christmas tree!



Jump River Town Chairman Alan Beadles, Jeryl Perenich, Jim and Darlene Thompson and their grandson Jake stand in front of the tree in the Wisconsin Capitol rotunda.

Inside:

Mark Twain Wilderness Ethics

RO Spreads Christmas Cheer

Monongahela Enhances Habitat

The Shawnee's Front-Liners

YCC Crew on the Chippewa

Summer Interns Reach Out

Freeing Up Elvov Creek

Popular Cave Gated, Reopened



For more information contact Jeryl Perenich at (715) 362-1328



Wilderness Ethics and Forest Ecology

Throughout the fall, seasonal wilderness, recreation, and fire employees of the Ava/Cassville/Willow Springs Ranger District on the Mark Twain National Forest reached out to local children in an effort to foster an awareness of land ethics and resource stewardship.

Forest ecology and wilderness classes were given to both home-schooled and public school children located near the designated wilderness areas on the ranger district. Four schools and two community groups, consisting of approximately 200 fourth through eighth grade children and cub scouts, were taught the basics of ecology and how land ethics play an important role in the sustainability of the nation's wilderness resources.

After the basics of wilderness and forest ecology were introduced, the children in each class participated in a mock exercise where their school inherited a 10,000-acre parcel of land to manage.

Land-use options such as wilderness, timber, recreation, and urban development were emphasized as important choices that are made when managing the land. Students made real world decisions that allowed them to compare the short-term and long-term economic and environmental benefits and consequences of their land-use decisions.

This team-oriented exercise allowed the children to learn about multiple use land management and how wilderness plays a critical role not only in the protection of natural resources, but in the protection of societal values. One of the most common comments from the teachers, group leaders, and children was that they now had a better understanding of why their local wilderness is an important part of the national forest.

One eighth-grade student from Plainview Elementary School in Ava, Missouri, said, "Until now, I never really understood why there were such heavy restrictions in wilderness, like riding ATV's (All-Terrain Vehicles)."

For more information contact Kale Horton at (417) 683-4428



David Auernheimer talks to local children and parents about the important role fire plays in wilderness and forest ecosystems.

RO Employees Help Spread Christmas Cheer



Edith Blancas (left) from the Council for Spanish Speaking-Family Living Program stands with RO employee Michelle Damato beside the Giving Tree.

Each year during the Christmas holiday season, the Regional Office in Milwaukee seeks to bring cheer to less fortunate area residents. Once again this year, RO employees participated in the Holiday Giving Tree Program coordinated by the Volunteer Center of Greater Milwaukee.

The Volunteer Center provided a list of needed items that employees can donate to the program. In 2003, the RO sponsored three local agencies: the Council for Spanish Speaking—Family Living Program, Girls and Boys Club and Caritas for Children.

The RO employees pick a "Wish List" tag and purchase a gift between \$15 and \$20. This year the age group was from 2 to 16 years. One of our agencies requested that gifts remain unwrapped as they are being shipped internationally to an orphanage in Poland.

Sixty tags were distributed, and the RO actually had employees who did not directly participate in the program drop off gifts. This was a wonderful way to spread some holiday magic and the employees of the Forest Service do such a great job of sharing with less fortunate people whom they've never met.

For more information contact Michelle Damato at (414) 297-1900



Partnership Enhances Monongahela Habitat

On September 10, officials from the National Wild Turkey Federation (NWTf), West Virginia Division of Natural Resources and Monongahela National Forest visited two savannahs they created through a Challenge Cost Share Agreement.

The savannahs, planned in the late 1990s as part of the Brandy Camp Timber Sale on Lockridge Mountain in Pocahontas County, total 29 acres. The Forest Service used the timber sale to open up the landscape by removing unneeded trees and hoped to use sale receipts to fund the rest of the project, including removal of smaller trees, stump and slash removal, seed bed preparation, fertilizing, liming and seeding.

When the sale did not raise enough money, it looked like completion of the project would not occur.

Shawn Head, a West Virginia DNR Wildlife Biologist, was able to get a commitment of \$10,000 from the DNR and \$10,000 from the NWTf Superfund, while the Forest Service contributed the remaining \$17,000 needed to fund the project. The DNR and Forest Service will work together to maintain the savannahs over time.

Savannahs provide important habitat for wild turkey, grouse, deer, bear, and non-game wildlife. Non-game species such as rodents and snakes take advantage of the occasional woodpiles while raptors use the trees to hunt these prey species. The widely scattered residual oak and hickory trees provide abundant acorns and hickory nuts, while the grasses and forbs that grow beneath provide abundant insect life and cover for turkey and grouse brood rearing habitat.

The standing snags provide denning, roosting, foraging, and nesting habitat for various bird and mammal species. Residual white pine provides additional roosting cover and nest sites for area wildlife. Biologists monitoring the savannahs have already observed an abundance of wildlife in the area including bears and turkeys.

For more information contact Robert Stovall at (304) 799-4334



The key participants in the effort pose in the enhanced savannah habitat on the Monongahela.

Shawnee Front-Liners Enjoy the Forest Experience



The Shawnee's front-liner staff at McGee Hill in Union County, Ill.

Visitors have the pleasure of going to the Shawnee National Forest recreation sites and viewing the wondrous vistas the Forest has to offer. On September 30 front-line employees of the Shawnee had an opportunity to leave their desks, don field clothes and revisit recreations sites to better answer visitors' queries.

In the first of two planned tours for front-liners, 11 employees met at the Jonesboro/Murphysboro District Office to begin their tour of the west side of the Forest. The first stop was Lincoln Memorial Picnic Grounds, site of the historic Lincoln and Douglas debate in 1858.

From Jonesboro, the group continued to travel in Union County to the Pine Hills Camp Ground and Oakwood Bottoms. They traveled the Levee Road to Winters Pond and the nationally famous Forest Road 345. The tour continued on to Little Grand Canyon, then to Pomona Natural Bridge where they had a chance to hike to the bridge. The last stop was as the Cedar Lake boat launch.

The entire group enjoyed the time together discussing frequently asked questions. They were able to add a visual image to describe forest attractions to visitors. The valuable information they gained will enhance visitors' time on the forest. Now, the front-liners know first hand just how arduous a hike is, how long it might take to get to a specific site and other details they did not have prior to the visit.

Serving the people is a goal of the Forest Service. Once the east side tour of the Forest is completed in the near future, Shawnee front-liners will have the knowledge needed to answer inquiries into what the Forest has to offer its visitors.

For more information contact Connie Roberts at (740) 592-6644



Volunteers Clear Trail on the Allegheny

The Friends of Allegheny Wilderness held their annual fall trail maintenance weekend Oct. 4-5. Director Kirk Johnson and three Slippery Rock University students assisted Bradford District Wilderness employees Eric Flood and Linda White in clearing the Hickory Creek Trail of trees blown down in the July 21 storm that swept through northwestern Pennsylvania.

The Bradford Wilderness staff considers blowdowns to be a natural part of the Wilderness environment, and makes every effort to leave them in place if they meet certain criteria: an average-sized person with a full pack must be able to duck under or step over the blowdown, or it must be possible to bypass the blowdown without causing unacceptable damage to the Wilderness resource.

Because of the amount of rerouting that would need to be done in order to bypass the tangle on the Hickory Creek trail in Hickory Creek Wilderness, it was determined to open the trail up once again.

The Bradford Wilderness staff prefers axes for trail clearing work because they provide a more natural appearance in Wilderness areas, although a small bow saw is often used for small springy branches that make axe work dangerous. Since straight lines don't generally occur in nature, they are visually obtrusive in the Wilderness. They show very clearly the human touch in an area where "the work of man's hand is substantially unnoticeable." The rough edges left by an axe also provide places for soil and water to collect and encourage the growth of moss and other small plants, softening the look of the chopped wood and helping it to break down.

A campsite was found far off the trail, and the volunteers got introduced to the Leave No Trace Principles and many techniques while beans and rice simmered on the camp stove and a bear bag line was rigged. We had no four-footed visitors during the night, and after a hearty breakfast of oatmeal and hot chocolate, the crew hit the trail again to clean out the last of the trees to be cleared.

Then camp was broken and all the gear repacked for the hike out. This was a great weekend trip all the way around. The students got some experience that will help them in their future careers, the Forest got some assistance in clearing a portion of the trails affected by the storm, and the Wilderness resource is protected.

For more information contact Linda White at (814) 362-4613



Ranger Eric Flood oversees a student's axe technique during blowdown removal.

The Chippewa's YCC Crew—"Just Do It"



YCC Crew members pose for a group photograph this summer.

For almost 30 years, the Deer River Ranger District has kept the YCC program on the Chippewa National Forest alive with innovative projects, strong education and work goals. In 2003, YCC leader Shawn Linder teamed up with a high-energy eight-person crew to really set the standard for future field crews.

Over the course of eight weeks, the crew completed projects across the district including: Timber Stand Improvement projects—white pine blister rust prevention; brush 15 miles of hiking and ski trails; build and install wood duck and bluebird houses; clean up of six dump sites; total of at least 70 bags of trash and 2500 lbs of scrap metal; erosion control projects at campsites and boat landings; fence installation at Experimental Forest—deer and rabbit enclosure; assist with archaeological dig at

Sucker Lakes PIT project; place trail barriers to prevent illegal ATV use in specific areas; and clean-up at various Forest warehouses and wayside rests.

For more information contact Melissa Rickers at (218) 335-8625



Midewin Welcomes Club Shedd to Prairie

On October 18, the Midewin National Tallgrass Prairie hosted a Club Shedd visit as part of the Community and Mentor Programs of the John G. Shedd Aquarium in Chicago.

Club Shedd meets once a month during the school year to take its 29 students in grades 6 through 12 on tours, visits with the animals, and meetings. The club is geared towards exposing students to animals and ecology so they can have a clearer vision of the larger environmental picture at hand.

Midewin Archaeologist Mike Rizo opened the visit by inviting the students into the Welcome Center to get their questions answered about the Prairie and its restoration and to take a look around. Students were eager to ask everything they could, and didn't resist the opportunity to challenge Rizo's knowledge of the Prairie before heading out on their tour of Midewin, which included a crowd favorite—the bunkers.

"We like to go to natural places like Midewin. We're just so impressed with everything we've seen and we haven't even seen everything yet," said Melanie Napoleon, Manager of the Community and Mentor Programs.

After the initial tour, students watched a fish collection demonstration at Prairie Creek by Frank Veraldi of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and Phil Willink from the Field Museum of Natural History.

Veraldi explained the methods for collecting fish, "when you're shocking you usually go upstream so all of the sediments can fall behind you," while Willink stressed to students that "you can be a good judge of the water quality by the fish that are present in it."

After the fish collection, the students participated in a stewardship project where they uprooted cottonwood seedlings on the Mola Tract, located across from the Visitor's Center. The cottonwoods were removed to assist in the restoration of this ephemeral wetland, and the students were more than enthusiastic to participate.

For more information contact Betsy Lopez at (815) 423-6370



Club Shedd students participated in a fish collection at Prairie Creek.

Summer Interns Reach Out in Milwaukee



Intern Brandon Ricard works on tree identification with students at the Indian Community Center.

The 2003 Conservation Education Team, stationed in Milwaukee, had an extremely busy but fun-filled 10 weeks this summer.

Throughout the summer, the team reached approximately 1600 children between the ages of 5-12 years. Interns Julie Christensen, Brandon Ricard, Berlisha Morton and Heidi Hancock visited 18 sites and interacted with the children, using games and activities with nature themes such as diversity, natural systems, sustainability, interconnectedness and stewardship to teach valuable conservation education themes.

Among the many locations visited by the interns were Milwaukee's Urban Treehouse site, Midtown Neighborhood Assn., La Causa Community Center, Neighborhood House Nature Center, YMCA, Boys and Girls Club, Indian Community School, and several Milwaukee Public Schools.

The Regional Office has hosted an intern team every year since 1996. This year Milwaukee was one of four teams along with Atlanta, Tallahassee, FL, and Huntsville, AL. The goal of the Conservation Education Intern Program is to interact with urban youth from diverse age groups, backgrounds, ethnicities and geographic locations to provide insight about natural resources, environmental issues and stewardship.

The program also aims to help urban youth make a connection between green spaces in their own communities and federal lands, and hopefully encourage them to one day consider a career in natural resources.

For more information contact Jean Claassen at (414) 297-1394



Partners Net a Big One on Elvoy Creek



Michigan Tech students played a key role in dredging Elvoy Creek in northern Wisconsin.

The headline in the Vilas County News Review read “The dam gone, Elvoy Creek runs free again.”

This indeed is true due to the efforts of many cooperators working with the Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest. Elvoy Creek flows just south of the Wisconsin-Michigan border, and empties into Brule Creek a short distance above the Brule River.

Elvoy Creek is one of the premiere trout streams on the Forest.

However, until recently, remnants of a logging dam constricted stream flow. The dam was constructed across the stream by the Menomonee-Bayshore Lumber Company in the 1890s. As of early this year, the dam sill was impounding water for 650 feet upstream, causing the water temperatures to warm and sediment to be deposited adversely affecting trout habitat.

Removal of the Elvoy Dam was one of many projects identified by a team of specialist from the Forest and the Wisconsin Department of

Natural Resources while preparing the Elvoy Brule Watershed Improvement Environmental Assessment. During this process, several other stream restoration activities were also identified in the Elvoy and Brule watersheds. However, none of these activities would occur without the help of our partners.

Prior to removing the dam structure, the Forest needed to secure a suitable site to act as a catch basin for sediment to be deposited in as it moved downstream out of the impounded area.

This is a result of the stream downcutting through accumulated sediment as it forms a new channel. The logical solution was to utilize the existing plunge pool below the dam.

Because the plunge pool had filled in over time, there wasn't enough room for the quantity of sediment that would move out of the impoundment. The pool was located on private land. The landowner also desired to maintain the plunge pool as deep water habitat for fishing.

The landowner and the Forest agreed to use the plunge pool to trap the sediment provided the Forest removed the accumulated material after the channel was restored upstream. Therefore it was necessary to dredge the pool to create enough room for the anticipated sediment movement.

Michigan Trout Unlimited helped by fostering communications with Michigan Tech's Keweenaw Research Center who were seeking test sites for a self-propelled dredge they were redesigning. The Forest also worked closely with the adjacent downstream landowner who provided access through his land for equipment to reach the project site.

This landowner provided an upland disposal area for the dredge spoils.

Michigan Tech's dredge removed approximately 1000 cubic yards of sediment from the plunge pool in July. The remaining dam structure was successfully lowered and stabilized about 1 week later utilizing the Forest's C&M crew and equipment. Removal of the dam and dike structures will result in the restoration of the floodplain and approximately 1000 feet of channel upstream. The Forest collaborated with the Northwood's Chapter of Wisconsin Trout Unlimited who provided partial funding to complete the project.

Through the efforts of all the cooperators involved, Elvoy Creek is now a stream again above the dam site. In the future we hope to see the continued natural restoration of the stream channel within the old impounded area. This should result in improved habitat conditions, and restoration of the cold water community within the area.

For more information contact Tina Smith at (715) 362-1362





Volunteers Help Reopen Popular Cave

The Monongahela National Forest and volunteers from the caving community installed a bat-friendly barricade in an underground passage eighteen hundred (1800) feet from the main entrance to the Bowden Cave in West Virginia.

By physically restricting access to a highly unstable area created by a 2002 ceiling collapse, the barricade allowed the rest of this popular cave to be reopened to the public.

In May 2002, a ceiling collapse occurred underground some 1800 feet from the main entrance to the very popular “wild” Bowden Cave. In response to the extraordinarily unstable conditions present near the collapse, the Monongahela's Forest Supervisor closed the cave on National Forest land to protect public health and safety.

Monongahela employees and members of the caving community worked together to examine the collapse area and discuss possible solutions. Because of the cave's importance for recreation and as bat habitat, the selected solution was to erect a bat-friendly barricade that would allow for continued bat use, yet protect visitors who use the most popular main entrance from risks associated with entering the unstable area.

Through a Volunteer Agreement with Mountain State Grotto of the National Speleological Society (NSS) and the professional skills and hard work of many, the barricade installation was completed during the four-day period, October 10-13, 2003.

The Forest Service supplied the materials, and volunteers contributed over 1000 hours to complete the project.

The logistics of constructing a 1-ton steel barricade 1800 feet underground was a formidable challenge—and volunteers rose to that challenge. They carried pieces of steel weighing as much as 200 pounds, generators and many other pieces of equipment by walking, crawling, and stooping through water, slick mud, over boulders and through narrow, tight places.

Professional bat gate builders and welders contributed their time and skills to the barricade design and construction. Volunteers less amenable to the subterranean world prepared meals for fellow volunteers, and coordinated the operation.

As a result of everyone's hard work, the portions of the Bowden Cave that were unaffected by the ceiling collapse are once again open to public use and enjoyment.

For more information contact Linda Tracy at (802) 747-6719



Volunteers pose with the completed Bowden Cave bat-friendly barricade on the Monongahela NF.

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